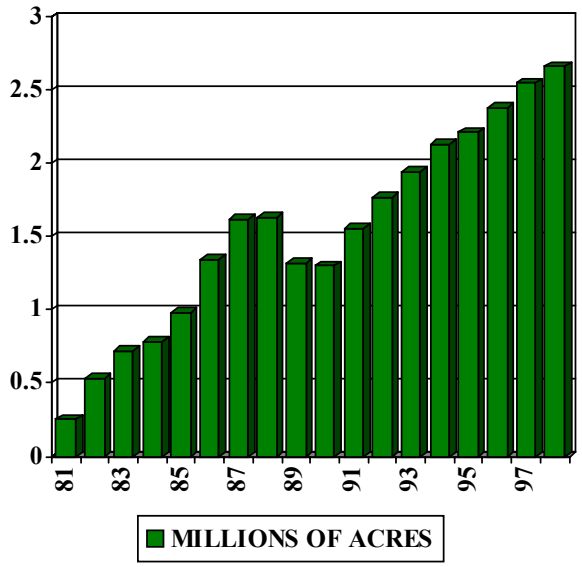
# DMAP Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1 September1999

## STATEWIDE DMAP HARVEST SUMMARY REPORT 1998-1999


Kenneth Hicks, taken on M&R Hunting Club

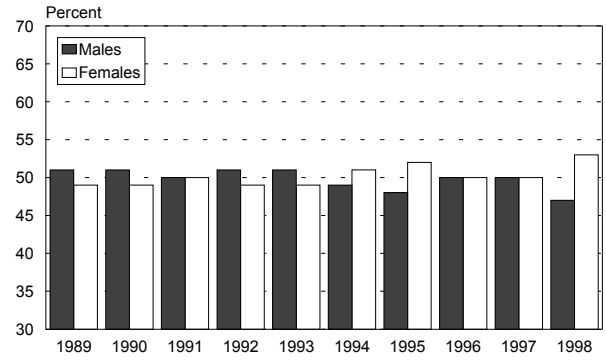
Statewide DMAP Enrollment 1981-1999




Enrollment acres were up by 6% in 1998 but the total deer kill was down by 6%. Statewide harvest sex ratio was 47% bucks and 53% does. Female harvest rates remained about the same but the buck kill rate was the lowest it's been in several years. There were two primary reasons for this decline in buck harvest--poor hunting conditions and more cooperators are electing to voluntarily restrict the antlered buck kill. Intentionally or unintentionally, there may be a good buck carry-over in some areas of the state this season. There is also the possibility of 1998-drought induced fawn losses (yearling buck in 1999) in the driest piney-woods sections of the state.

### HARVEST SEX RATIO

Statewide DMAP




## Important: DMAP Record Keeping Announcement

Column 7 of the DMAP Deer Kill Record Form (Driver's License/State I.D. Number) should be completed by entering **one** of the following:

1) Your Big Game License Number—Traditional Hunting License
2) Your Transaction Number (for the BG License)—Point of Sale License
3) Your Authorization Number (for the BG License)—Telephone License Sale
4) Lifetime Hunting License Number--Lifetime

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License

**5)** Date of Birth—*All* Under 16 Years Old and *Residents* 60 Years and Older

**DO NOT ENTER YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE OR STATE I.D. NUMBER.**

The Point of Sale (POS) licensing system is not currently operational statewide. As a consequence, hunters with the traditional licenses will have a Big Game Number while others will not. POS license holders can find their transaction number at the lower left of their license. Enforcement personnel will verify acquisition of the appropriate licenses with this information.

# DMAP RULE CHANGES FOR 1999-2000

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission passed a notice of intent in May that contained significant amendments to long-standing DMAP rules and regulations. These rule changes were proposed as a means to enhance the administration and enforcement of this growing program. A 120-day public comment period was held before the amendments were finalized.

Three of the basic rule changes (mandatory key turn-in, mandatory DMAP posting, and DMAP tag in possession) generated a considerable number of telephone and mail comments to the LWFC. These rule changes also created some confusion among DMAP cooperators awaiting final Commission action on September 2, 1999. As a consequence, many cooperators waited until ratification of the final rule before deciding to continue with this volunteer program.

**The LWFC adopted the following proposed rule changes in their entirety**:

- DMAP fees must be paid prior to October 1 each year.
- The person listed on the DMAP application as the contact person will serve as the liaison between the DMAP Cooperator and the Department.
- Each hunter must have a tag in his possession while hunting on DMAP land in order to harvest an antlerless deer.
- The DMAP tag shall be attached through the hock in such a manner that it cannot be removed before the deer is transported.
- The DMAP tag will remain with the deer so long as the deer is kept in the camp or field, is in route to the domicile of its possessor, or until such deer has been stored at the domicile of its possessor or divided at a cold storage facility and has thus become identifiable as food rather than as wild game.
- The DMAP number shall be recorded on the possession tag of the deer or any part of the animal when divided and properly tagged.
- Documentation of harvested deer shall be kept daily by the cooperator. The contact person shall provide this documentation of harvested deer to the Department upon request. Cooperators who do not have a field camp will be given 48 hours to provide this requested documentation.
- Information on deer harvested shall be submitted by March1.
- Failure of the cooperator to follow these rules and regulations may result in suspension and cancellation of the program on those lands involved.

**The language on one proposed rule change was altered then adopted by the LWFC as follows:**

- Each cooperator that enrolls in DMAP is strongly encouraged to provide keys or lock combinations annually to the Enforcement Division of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for access to main entrances of the DMAP property. Provision of keys is **voluntary**; however, the cooperator's compliance will ensure that DMAP enrolled properties will be properly and regularly patrolled.

**One proposed rule change concerning**

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**mandatory DMAP posting was tabled by LWFC for consideration in January 2000.**

- At this time, a proposed rule change for consideration will make DMAP posting mandatory **next year**. DMAP posted signs will probably be required at all entrance points and every 1000 feet completely around the perimeter of the property.

**Notice!!!!**
DMAP Fee Payment Deadline
October 1st

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# RECENT LOUISIANA RESEARCH

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## Released Northern Bucks Show Poor Antler Development

**By Jonathan W. Day, Region 6 Biologist**

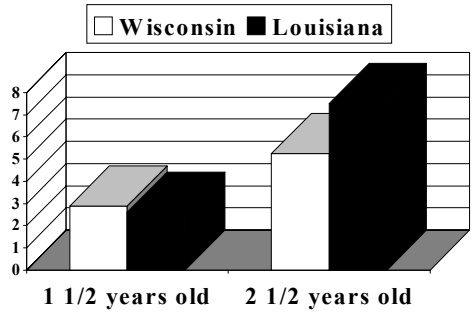
If you hunt deer in Louisiana, no doubt you have heard the idea of moving those big, bucks from up north into our state. Sounds like a good enough idea at first: move bigger deer down here, let them grow, reproduce, and have big babies. Next thing you know, Louisiana is producing Canadian-sized whitetails. But is this really the way it would work?

From 1996 to 1998, I was a graduate student at LSU and conducted research that attempted to answer that very question. Twenty-two (22) buck fawns from Wisconsin were released on the Golden Ranch Plantation near Gheens in LaFourche Parish. Although it is in the marsh, Golden Ranch is good quality habitat with agricultural grains and winter forage crops readily available from croplands and food plots. In fact, all 50,000 acres are managed primarily for deer and waterfowl

For 2 years, my field assistants and I watched native and Wisconsin-born deer on Golden Ranch. The habitat on Golden Ranch was open and, since the northern deer had colored ear tags, it was easy to tell them apart. When we spotted a buck, we recorded the tag color and the number of points. Different tag colors represented different ages. In order to compare how well the northern deer were performing, in terms of antler development, the number of points on northern deer were compared to the number of points on hunter harvested native deer. The results were quite interesting.

At 1½ years old, the released Wisconsin bucks averaged 2.9 points and the native Golden Ranch deer averaged 2.6 points—no real difference. However, at 2½ years old, the Wisconsin deer averaged 5.25 points while the native deer averaged nearly 7.5 points—a big difference. The native Louisiana deer had over two points more on their racks than the northern deer.

Average # of antler points for released northern deer and Golden Ranch deer by age class




These results were startling, since in a pen situation, Wisconsin bucks routinely have more antler points than Louisiana deer at any age. So why did this happen, and what does this mean? Well first, there are several possible explanations. To begin with, there is a biological rule, called Bergman's Rule, which states that mammals in northern latitudes will have larger body sizes than mammals in southern latitudes. You all already know the size difference between deer on Avery Island and in Canada. This is related to air temperature and an animal's ability to keep warm during cold winters. Larger animals have a lower surface area to volume ratio than

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smaller animals, so they lose less heat. You all probably also know that antler growth and size is related to the general condition of a buck. Therefore, when I moved northern deer to the south, they were not adapted to our hot summers and mild winters. They ate less than normal (much like we all do when it's hot), and therefore did not put on the weight they should have. This ended up taking away from the reserves necessary for proper antler development. Also, Midwestern deer are typically very well fed. The vegetation at Golden Ranch, though supplemented with agricultural crops and food plots, may not have been nutritious enough to support such large antler growth.

Now while much of this is speculation, nature has made it clear that animals are adapted for specific environments. Even white-tailed deer, which are hearty animals and can be found just about everywhere, have become adapted to specific areas. These areas are usually associated with climate. Other factors besides climate can be harmful to relocated deer. For instance, deer up north are more susceptible to bluetongue than southern deer. Or even worse, the relocated deer could bring a new disease down to our deer.

So while the results of my study do not necessarily mean that northern deer will never do well in Louisiana, they do show that things do not always go as expected. More importantly, the potential problems associated with relocating animals in this way illustrate why translocation of deer is not necessarily a good idea. We must remember that animals are adapted for specific environments and relocating them for our own needs may do more harm than good.

## Northern Deer More Susceptible to Bluetongue Disease

Bluetongue is the most important viral disease affecting white-tailed deer in the United States. A serious outbreak of bluetongue occurred in Dr. Harry Jacobson's deer research pen at Mississippi State University in 1994. Dr. Jacobson was conducting genetic research on 114 deer originating from seven different states. Thirty-six of these deer died. When the genetic background of these deer was examined, northern deer died at a much higher rate than southern deer. Hybrid deer of mixed origin (southern x northern) had variable mortality rates depending on the amount of northern genetic influence.

| Origin | # Deer | # Mortalities |
|---|---|---|
| Pure Southern | 24 | 3 (12.5%) |
| ¾ S x ¼ N | 29 | 5 (17.2%) |
| ½ S x ½ N | 44 | 19 (43.2%) |
| Pure Northern | 17 | 11 (64.7%) |

This research points out another fallacy of the commonly held belief—"all we need to improve the genetics of our small Louisiana deer is to bring in some more of those huge Wisconsin bucks". It appears likely that bluetongue would eliminate these "superior" imports before they could breed. Even if they did succeed, their genetic contribution would only be temporary, since their offspring would also have a higher probability of getting bluetongue than our wonderfully adapted and productive Louisiana deer.

SOURCE: 19th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Deer Study Group, Orlando, Florida –1996.

## Breeding Date Research: Area 4

**By Dr. Kim Tolson, Biology Department Head, University of Louisiana Monroe**

The first year of a 2-year study on the breeding biology of white-tailed in area 4 (East Carroll, Morehouse, Ouachita & Richland Parishes) was conducted in the winter of 1998-99. This study is a cooperative project between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and researchers at the University of Louisiana Monroe. Shannon Anderson will use the data collected in her M.S. thesis at ULM and by LDWF to evaluate hunting season dates in relation to peak breeding activity in Area 4.

Buck activity was monitored in East Carroll,

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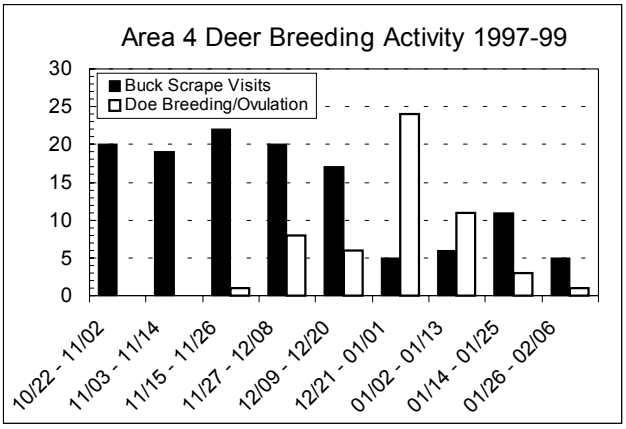
Morehouse, and Richland Parishes from October 1998 to February 1999 using sensor cameras placed on scrape sites located on DMAP lands. These cameras are capable of printing the date and time on each photograph so the buck visits can be recorded with this data. According to recent studies, there is a period of heavy scraping activity that occurs **prior** to the peak breeding period.




Reproductive tracts were collected from 41 does in Area 4 that were obtained by special collections in February and March and by salvaging road kill animals. The fetuses present were measured to determine their age and then, by subtracting the age in days of the fetus from the collection date of the doe, a breeding date was determined.

Data obtained from this first year revealed that peak breeding occurred during the last two weeks of December in those areas sampled. Buck scrape visits were highest prior to this time, and visits dropped off dramatically when bucks were breeding does in late December.

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# VELVET ANTLERS DURING HUNTING SEASON

**By Jonathan Day, Region 6 Biologist**

Certainly every hunter has heard stories about "velvet bucks" during the hunting season. These velvet racks are definitely unusual, and make for great stories around the camp. However, as with most hunting stories, it is hard to separate the fact from the fiction. Just last season I had the opportunity to examine a velvet buck while working a check station at Thistlethwaite WMA. A hunter on neighboring property harvested a beautiful 4 ½ year-old, 250-pound, 8-point monster. His rack was quite massive, sporting 7-inch bases and a variety of small kicker points. The buck was a trophy in all regards, even with the fuzzy layer covering his antlers. The unusual harvest created quite a stir around the check station; everyone wanted to know how and why. Well, here is your answer.

The antler cycle of deer is controlled by photoperiod or the length of daylight in a 24-hour period. Changes in photoperiod cause a variety of changes in a deer's body, one of which is the stimulation of the testicles to produce testosterone. During the spring and summer, testosterone levels

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are low and antlers are growing. During this time, the antlers are covered in living tissue called velvet. Deer antlers are growing bone and the velvet provides the antlers with a supply of blood. Deer antler is the fastest growing material of its kind among all mammals. As fall approaches, and the amount of daylight decreases, the production of testosterone increases, preparing bucks for the breeding season. The increase of testosterone causes the antlers to harden and the velvet to die. The drying velvet is sloughed away or is rubbed off on trees and saplings. At the end of winter when daylight increases again, testosterone levels decrease, causing the antlers to drop and the cycle begins again.

Antlers remain in velvet when testosterone levels are not high enough to cause antler hardening and velvet shedding. Insufficient testosterone can be caused by trauma to the testicles or by disease or birth defects. Bucks that are castrated while in hard antlers will shed immediately and begin growing new ones (mimicking the end of a normal cycle). The new set of antlers will never shed velvet or drop from the head. Instead, they will grow for a season then stop when other bucks are hardening their antlers. The velvet antlers will never shed, and each year new mass will be added. Buck fawns that are castrated will either never develop antlers if castration is done before pedicel development, or will retain velvet antlers if done after pedicel development

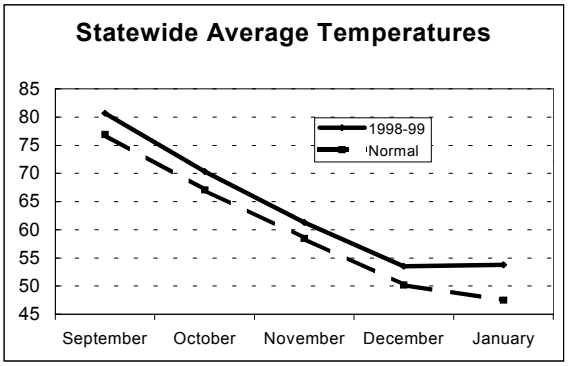
In a non-traumatic condition called cryptorchidism, the testicles fail to descend into the scrotal sac and remain in the body cavity. In some cases, the testicles will produce enough testosterone to maintain a normal antler cycle, but the buck will be sterile. In the majority of cryptorchidism cases, the testicles are non-functional, and will cause the buck to remain in velvet.

Of course, there may be natural variation in a buck's cycle that causes him to shed late in the year. It is common for bowhunters to see velvet bucks in October. Often, disease can delay the normal cycle of antler growth.
The buck I examined last year was in exceptional health judging by his body weight and age. His massive antlers indicated that he had been growing his rack for several years in a row. Upon inspection, I noticed that he lacked descended testicles, and had no visible trauma in the scrotal area. So in this case, I concluded that the velvet buck suffered from cryptorchidism, and had probably been growing the same set of antlers for 4 years.

It is important to note that cryptorchidism does not affect the meat in any way. However, if disease is to blame for velvet antlers, hunters should exercise caution when dressing their bounty. If you have any questions regarding velvet antlers or any other abnormality, contact your local wildlife biologist

# DEER MOVEMENT 1998-99

The 1998/99 deer season was a disappointment for many hunting clubs and landowners enrolled in DMAP. A very mild winter with unusually warm temperatures kept deer activity suppressed. At this time of year deer have on their winter coats and when temperatures begin to rise above 60 degrees it becomes uncomfortable for them. During cold weather deer activity increases as deer seek food on a more regular schedule, usually every 4-6 hours. When the temperatures are warm their energy demands decrease as does their need to feed. It is not uncommon for activity to occur primarily during the nocturnal hours, when the temperatures are cooler.




Source: Louisiana Office of State Climatogy (LOSC)

Because of this many DMAP cooperators could not

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fill their allotment of doe tags and the female harvest was down from the previous year. According to the annual deer harvest estimate the statewide deer kill was down from the 1997/98 season. Perhaps Mother Nature will be kinder this year and allow us to wear our winter hunting gear. It certainly would help to improve the deer hunting.

The lower deer kill last year should result in more deer being carried over resulting in higher deer populations. On lands practicing Quality Deer Management, the smaller bucks that were passed up will hopefully be a year older and larger. It is very important that cooperators make a serious effort this year and use all of their allotted tags and keep the herd in balance with the habitat.

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# SAWTOOTH OAK'S REVENGE

**By Donald "Duck" Locascio, Jr. , Region 4 Wildlife Forester**

Longleaf Plantation in Amite County Mississippi has been on a quality buck management program for 15 years. With a strong mature buck component in the deer herd, rutting sign in the form of rubs and scrapes is abundant each year. Bucks have taken a particular interest in our sawtooth oaks planted in 1994. For the past 5 years, rutting bucks have ravished the plantation with their rubbing behavior, seriously damaging 80% of the seedlings. However, in October 1998 one of the larger trees extracted a bit of revenge when a 2.5 year old buck in the process of rubbing caught his antler in the fork of the tree and eventually died. We left the skull in place and today, the tree still proudly displays its "trophy" buck.

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# HABITAT

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# 1998 DEER CORN TESTED FOR AFLATOXIN

Louisiana's 1998 record corn crop (700,000 acres) suffered severe stress due to a record 100-year drought. Yields were only 60% of the national average and a large-scale infection of *Aspergillus* fungus contaminated an estimated 50% of the crop with the potent biological poison **aflatoxin.** Sadly, a large portion of the infected corn was sold at low salvage prices. In some cases, truckloads that could not be sold were dumped back into the fields. Louisiana State University Extension Service estimated that 160,000 acres could not be harvested and were plowed under or mowed down as a requirement for crop insurance.

Louisiana Department of wildlife and Fisheries had serious concerns about the health risk to all forms of wildlife from exposure to aflatoxin. There were obvious concerns for the agricultural regions of the state. However, the potential for large quantities of cheap contaminated corn being transported to the piney-woods as deer corn was also a serious concern. A recent survey of DMAP cooperators indicated that 75% feed or bait deer and corn was the number one grain used (see Baiting Survey in this issue).

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) set limits for aflatoxin in food and livestock feeds involved in interstate commerce in 1965. FDA action levels for aflatoxin contaminated core are:

- **20 ppb** – food use by humans, feed for immature animals, dairy animals
- **100 ppb** – feed for breeding cattle, breeding swine or poultry.
- **200 – 300 ppb** – feed for finishing swine and

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cattle.

The Southeast Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at University of Georgia recommends that contaminated corn with aflatoxin levels in excess of these FDA levels should not be used for supplemental wildlife feeding.

The toxicity of aflatoxin to wildlife depends on the species, age, health, nutritional status of the animal, as well as, contamination level, how much is eaten and other environmental factors (natural food supply). Acute poisoning of deer has only been demonstrated in the lab at extremely high aflatoxin levels, not in the wild. Laboratory test, on young deer and turkeys show sub-clinical symptoms including reduced food intake, damage to internal organs (liver), suppressed immune system and weight loss.

Young rapidly growing animals are always more susceptible than mature animals of the same species. Turkeys and ducks appear to be more susceptible than other wildlife species (See - Aflatoxicosis in La. Geese).

Assisted by many DMAP Cooperators, LDWF collected 206 corn samples statewide to test for aflatoxin. The target for sampling was deer corn feeders and storage containers where 170 samples were taken. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) conducted aflatoxin tests free of charge. Table one below contains the results of these tests.

TABLE 1. AFLATOXIN LEVELS FROM 1998-1999 LOUISIANA CORN SAMLPLES

| CORN SOURCE | AFLATOXIN LEVELS | |
|---|---|---|
| | > 20 ppb | > 100 ppb |
| Retail Stores | 13% | 4% |
| Farmland | 56% | 40% |
| Feeder/Storage | 28% | 16% |
| All Sources | 28% | 17% |

These tests indicate that, under the drought conditions of 1998, the safest source of deer corn was retail stores. However, one sack purchased from a store in Caldwell Parish tested 1,100 ppb. from a store in Caldwell Parish tested 1,300 ppb.

Over one-half (56%) of the samples originating directly from farms exceeded 20 ppb. Non-irrigated fields were particularly prone to infection and were a definite health risk to wildlife in 1998. One sample of ear-corn from a piney-woods hunting club in Ouachita Parish tested 3,200 ppb. In the vicinity of a snow goose die-off in Franklin and Richland Parishes, two fields of unharvested, plowed under corn had levels exceeding 5,000 ppb.

Aflatoxin proliferates in two situations: under **field conditions** during a drought and during **improper transportation or storage** of corn at high temperatures and high moisture content.

### *Field Conditions*

A primary avenue of fungal infection in the field is the entrance of spores into the kernel by way of the silk during pollination. Drought conditions during the pollination phase of corn development increases the number of spores and stresses the plant allowing increased infection rates and an increased level of aflatoxin production. Fortunately there are very narrow conditions suitable for large-scale infections and excessive aflatoxin production. Notable outbreaks have occurred in the southeast during droughts in 1977, 1980, 1988 and 1998. According to LDAF officials, only minor aflatoxin infections have occurred in south-central Louisiana during the 1999 growing season.

### *Transportation and Storage*

Aflatoxin contamination of corn most frequently occurs during transportation and storage. Improperly stored at high temperatures and high humidity, clean corn can develop very high contamination levels. Aflatoxin can be produced within 24 hours and a biologically significant amount in a few days. Year in and year out, hunters should be concerned with proper transportation, storage and feeding of corn to avoid the detrimental impacts of aflatoxicosis.

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# SCWDS BRIEFS

## Aflatoxin in Louisiana Geese

Volume 15 April 1999

**By Todd Cornish and Victor Nettles, DVMs**

A significant mortality event involving geese was observed by personnel from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service starting in mid-November 1998 and continuing through early March 1999. Sick and dead geese were observed in cornfields and adjacent flooded rice fields in several northeast Louisiana parishes, and estimated losses exceeded 10,000 birds. Most of the geese affected were snow (and blue) geese, with lesser numbers of Ross' and white fronted geese involved. The geese were observed feeding in cornfields that had not been harvested due to high levels of aflatoxin; most of the affected fields had been disked or mowed. Live geese and goose carcasses were collected by biologists and sent to the National Wildlife Health Center (NHWC) in Madison, WI, and SCWDS for examination. At necropsy, degenerative and reactive liver lesions were observed in most geese, and some geese had degenerative lesions in other organs including the spleen, pancreas, and kidneys. These lesions were characteristic of aflatoxicosis, and aflatoxin or its metabolites were detected in stomach contents from 2 snow geese at the NWHC. Analysis of corn from fields where the geese were found dead yielded levels of aflatoxin as high as 8,200 ppb, which greatly exceeds USDA standards.

Aflatoxins are produced by several fungal organisms in the genus *Aspergillus*. The toxins are produced when the fungi grow on cereal grains, including corn, under warm, humid conditions. The toxins are more commonly produced in grains during storage but can be produced when the fungi grow on grains in the field. Aflatoxins principally affect the liver and can lead to degenerative lesions and reactive changes serious enough to cause death. These toxins also can effect a variety of other organ systems, including the immune system, and there are both acute and chronic forms of toxicosis with these compounds. Most species of mammals and birds are susceptible to aflatoxicosis, with great variability among species and especially between age classes of animals. Birds and monogastric mammals are more susceptible than ruminants, and younger animals are generally more susceptible than adults. There is no medical treatment for aflatoxicosis, and prevention is the key to minimizing wildlife losses.

Losses in wildlife species due to aflatoxicosis have been described; however, large mortality events like the one observed with the geese in Louisiana are rare. Extrapolation from experimental trials in domestic animals and infrequent reports of wildlife mortality events in the field have been the basis of a SCWDS position that grains known to be contaminated with aflatoxin in excess of levels allowable in animal feeds (up to 300 ppb) should not be used in wildlife feeding programs. However, a more problematic issue is what to do with condemned standing crops because so little data exist. Two published cases of waterfowl mortality in Texas revealed that the aflatoxin levels in waterfowl crop (stomach) contents ranged from 10 to 500 ppb, while the peanuts that were tested from one field contained only 110 ppb. In Florida, bobwhite quail from corn fields with mean aflatoxin levels over 1,000 ppb had aflatoxin levels in crop contents that averaged only 63 ppb. Nevertheless, some of the quail had liver lesions consistent with aflatoxicosis.

The devastating losses in Louisiana, although unfortunate, provide wildlife managers with an important new reference point documenting the risks of aflatoxicosis in waterfowl. It is apparent that very high levels of aflatoxin (several thousand ppb) in standing crops can present a significant hazard to waterfowl. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry estimated that 360,000 acres of corn failed in 1998 due to drought, and much of this grain probably contained high aflatoxin levels. Furthermore, the aflatoxin level present in the corn when farmers made the decision not to harvest was probably lower than that which developed as the corn continued to mold in the field.

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The aflatoxin crisis is over for now, but history tells us it will recur, if not it Louisiana, then somewhere else in the South. Mortality events like this raise many questions about what preventive actions can be taken when vast acres of crops are involved. Can programs be developed to help farmers harvest crops that have no commercial feed value? Can contaminated corn be salvaged for uses other than animal feeds? Is it possible to completely cover grains by plowing or will plowing enhance availability to wildlife species? And finally, will hazing or other deterrent measures work? These are questions that need to be examined, and wildlife management agencies should develop partnerships with the agricultural community to address these issues.

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# 1998 DMAP BAITING SURVEY

LDWF was seriously concerned about the potential health hazard to wildlife from the severe contamination of corn with aflatoxin in 1998. To gather some background information on the practice of feeding/baiting deer, DMAP Cooperators were asked to complete and return a survey card included in the November 1998 newsletter. A total of 1322 DMAP Cooperators were polled and 471 (37%) took the time to respond. Summaries of the responses to the seven questions asked are listed below:

- 75% baited or fed deer in 1997 and corn was the number one item used followed by soybeans, deer pellets, calf feed, sweet feed, milo, sunflower seeds, sweet potatoes, rice bran, acorns and salt
- 31% provided deer with year-round feed – Many of the remaining 69% started their feeding program 2 to 3 months prior to the season
- 67% hunted over bait
- 98% were aware of the current aflatoxin problem and 81% made adjustments to their feeding program to avoid problems
- 86% planted food plots to attract deer - many of the 14% not planting were located in marsh or swamp habitats where soil conditions made planting impractical
- 80% hunted over food plots
- 31% would support a ban on hunting over bait, 65% would not and 4% were undecided

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# PEOPLE

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## Association News

## Region VI DMAP and QDM News

**By Tony Vidrine, Region 6 Biologist**

How do I better manage the deer herd on my club to attain better quality bucks? This was the topic of discussion on Saturday, August 21, 1999 at the Iberville Civic Center in Plaquemine, La.
The second Quality Deer Management (QDM) short course was held to educate landowners, managers, and hunters on quality deer management techniques. Over 250 interested sportsman attended this very informative workshop. This workshop was again sponsored by A. Wilbert's and Sons, LLC. The seminar had an impressive group of speakers and a wide array of topic.

1) Dr. Karl Miller, Associate Professor, University of Georgia: Scent Communication in Whitetails--Implications for QDM and How Deer See and Talk
2) Brian Murphy, Executive Director, QDMA: The Future of Deer Hunting and To Cull or Not to Cull
3) Ben Koerth, The Institute of White-tailed Deer Management & Research: The use of Infrared Game Cameras in Deer Hunting and Management and Successful Food Plots
4) Don Bales, Wildlife Biologist, Mississippi State University Coop. Extension Service: Establishing QDM Coops
5) Dave Moreland and Larry Savage , LDWF Deer

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Specialists: DMAP Program and the Future of QDM in Louisiana

6) Tony Vidrine, LDWF Region 6 Biologist: The Choctaw Bayou QDM Asociation.

Choctaw Bayou QDM Association encompasses 37,957 acres, involving 28 hunting clubs and was formed prior to the start of the 1997-98 season. Improvements have been seen in the overall average body weights and antler development of the bucks. We will continue with a 6 point or better program in the coop area for the 1999-2000 season and hope to continue to see improvements in the quality of the deer herd.

A QDM association was initiated in and around the Corps of Engineers Indian Bayou Area. Several meetings were held with the hunting clubs that surround the Indian Bayou Area to discuss QDM for this area. The COE implemented a 6 point or better rule on the area with the agreement of 8 surrounding landowners and clubs joining in this management strategy. Seven clubs and one landowner signed an statement of intent to follow the management rules. This area encompasses 64,019 acres , with 17,781 acres being COE property.

Hunting clubs that are in the Ramah area, near the Red Diamond HC met on two occasions to discuss forming a QDM Association in that area. Results of area browse surveys, factors affecting quality, harvest data collections from area DMAP clubs, and information on how to form a QDM Association. were discussed at the meetings. Represented at these meetings were about 17 hunting clubs that surround the core Red Diamond HC. This Association could potentially involve 20,000 to 25,000 acres in this area. With an increased antlerless harvest, improved habitat due to timber logging, and a select type harvest of the bucks, the quality of the deer herd is expected to improve around this area in the future.

**Visit Our Web Site at http://www.wlf.state.la.us/ to find out more about DMAP and Application Forms**

# Between the Stands

**By Richard McMullins, Region 1 Biologist**

If I were to ask you, "Where would be the best spot on your hunting property to kill a deer?", you would probably answer by naming a few places like the "Slaughter House Stand," Jim's "Hot Box" or the Clay Hill stand. Most of the answers I would get would probably refer to a box stand with a long reputation of producing deer. But I would be willing to bet that you would be wrong, especially if we were to include a 3 ½ year-old or older buck in the deal.

It has been my experience that the best spots on any hunting club or lease are just out of sight of the permanent stands found there. Maybe just around the curve in the road, just over the edge of the hill or out of view in the thicket you can barely see. I've realized in the past 25 years, deer can pattern us a lot faster than we can pattern them. Every time we go to a stand, we make noise, leave scent and maybe get seen. Don't think for a moment that deer forget these incidents. They have been alerted to your presence. Ever get a speeding ticket in one of those sleepy little country towns? Slowed down from then on, didn't you. Same thing. Let me give you a few examples.

I was invited to shoot a cull on a well-managed club. The buck had to be 4 ½ years-old or older, no drop tines or Boone & Crockett material. I spent a morning scouting and found a great crossing midway between a couple of their stands. Out of sight of either stand, hardly any visible tracts on a hard packed logging road, but one heck of a rub and scrape line leading up to the road. When conditions were right, 39$^{o}$, light rain and wind from the NE, I got up a couple of hours before daybreak and took off. I got my climbing stand situated just at first light and within five minutes passed a 3 ½ year-old, eight point with an 18" spread. Boy this is going to be tough, I said to myself. An hour and a half later

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an immense eight point with long tines showed up looking for the doe he thought he had heard calling. He was 6 ½ years-old and had never been seen before on the club or been caught on one of the many cameras that were in use at the time.

6 ½ Year Old 9-Point

Another time, I was invited to hunt a club in Tensas Parish. After I drew my stand, I asked permission to use a climbing stand. As I approached the box stand, I found a good trail just out of sight around a curve in the 4-wheeler road. When I saw the stand, I backed up and climbed a little down wind of the freshly used trail. Within 30 minutes, I collected a nice 2 ½ year-old six point with a good spread. He was also one of those rare deer with a woolly under coat. This was Friday evening. The next morning, I drew the same stand. This time I went beyond the box stand. Just as I expected, as I lost view of the permanent stand, fresh deer signs began to appear much more frequently. The wind was right, I climbed right there. At 9:30, a heavy beamed 3 ½ year, nine point with huge brow tines came by trailing a doe. His trail ended right there. He was the largest killed on the club that year. The club members wanted to know my secret. I told them I was hunting the funnels created by their permanent stands. (They put up a stand there the next summer, and ruined the spot for me.)

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## Between The Wolf Packs

Researchers in Minnesota placed radio transmitters on timber wolves and white-tailed deer to study the relation of their home ranges. They found that each wolf pack had an exclusive territory, which was defended from encroachment by other packs. These territories were well marked and did not overlap. When researchers overlaid wolf territory maps with the home range maps of individual deer, a very interesting pattern immerged. Deer were spending a lot of time in the buffer zone between wolf pack territories, where the probability of encountering wolves was the lowest. Deer seldom visited the core area of wolf territories.

Conclusions from the study were obvious. As tasty prey animals pursued by all large carnivores, deer have been programmed by Mother Nature to avoid areas frequented by predators and they have gotten **vvvvvvvery good** at it!!!!

With this well-honed predator avoidance behavior developed over a very long time, it is not to surprising that adult deer of both sexes find it a mere "stroll in the park" to avoid today's typical deer hunter. Wolves mark their territory with howls, scats, urine and claw marks in the soil. Modern hunters mark theirs with the howl of an ATV, toilet paper, empty corn sacks, coke cans, shooting lanes and the scratch marks of a disc in a food plots. And, the core area of the hunting territory is exceptionally well marked with a large box stand, corn feeders and abundant human scent from repetitive regularly scheduled visits. Adult bucks very seldom visited these core areas **during the daylight**.

It's a no-brainer for a mature buck to identify these territories and execute all of their meager daylight movements "Between the Stands". If mature bucks are your quarry, get out of your box stand and hunting routine, and do it the "old fashion way" as described by "Wild Man" Richard McMullin in the accompanying article.

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3 ½ Year Old 9-Point

A few years ago, I had our dozer in the shop in September. As I was about to leave one of the mechanics came out and asked if I was interested in big deer antlers. Of course, I answered yes. As the conversation went forward, it became apparent that he had a big set of sheds he wanted to show me. And they were big, really big. Like 180 class. He said he had found them while clearing his shooting lanes at his box stand a few days earlier. He told me he was planning to hunt the stand every chance he could and was going to kill that buck. I asked him where he had hunted the previous season. He replied that he had hunted the same stand exclusively. I asked him, "Doesn't that tell you something?" I advised him to hunt the thickets and surprise the deer. I don't know if he followed my advice. The buck was killed a mile away on another lease three months later in a thicket, well away from any permanent stand. The lucky hunter had no idea a buck like that was anywhere in the country. (The buck made B & C.)

I could go on and on, but the main point is don't wear out your stands. Save your comfortable box stands for those rainy days when you can't hunt otherwise or for when you have a small youngster along when the comfort, security and concealment are needed. Otherwise, get out there, read the wind, park your 4-wheeler a half mile away at least, sneak into the funnel you've created and take the old buck who has been dodging you the last couple of years. Put the HUNT back into hunting. And you don't have to climb a tree to be successful. A lot of my older bucks have been taken while I was on the ground. Good luck. Pay attention. And be aware.

# Quality Deer Management in Louisiana

**By David Moreland, Deer Study Leader**

A lot of deer hunters in this state are asking the question " *Why doesn't La. initiate a program like MS, Arkansas, or Texas and start growing bigger bucks?"* Growing quality or trophy deer is the current trend in the southeast United States. A person cannot pick up a deer magazine without finding articles about growing larger bucks. I suspect that both Quality and Trophy Deer Management will continue to be topics of discussion as we enter the 21st Century.
In the next few paragraphs I will try to explain the deer management program of LDWF and the direction that it is going in.

The job of LDWF is to manage the state's wildlife and fishery resources and allow as much commercial and recreational opportunity as possible without harming the resource. With regard to the deer population in this state our objective is to maintain a healthy herd that is in balance with the natural habitat. While hunting and fishing is our business, we do not make rules and regulations or create seasons to sell licenses.

We have surveyed deer hunters as to their opinion concerning Quality Deer Management.
Deer hunters were asked several questions concerning their preference relative to QDM in the 1997/98 Game Harvest Survey. Their response was as follows: 46% preferred mandatory QDM with antlered buck restrictions, 42% preferred voluntary QDM, and 12% did not support any form of QDM. This equates to 54% of the deer hunters against the idea of mandatory QDM regulations.

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Presently many clubs and landowners are practicing QDM in this state. Some have even gone into Trophy Deer Management. Because of this we are seeing an increase in the adult buck harvest along with a corresponding increase in the number of trophy class deer killed each year.
There are more deer listed in our Big Game Records that have been killed during the nineties than any previous decade.

Because we have not established mandatory buck regulations like our neighbor states, it does not mean that we are sitting on our hands doing nothing. LDWF allows clubs and landowners to choose the type of deer management program they want to apply to their land. There are many small landowners and clubs in this state who are not concerned with growing large deer and who simply want to kill a few deer each year. We work with all clubs and landowners, large or small, who seek our assistance in managing deer on their land. If small landowners want to grow quality deer we encourage them to form associations with their neighbors to better accomplish this objective. We frequently encourage DMAP cooperators to initiate QDM management on their land. I believe QDM works best on a volunteer basis. I also believe mandatory regulations are not in the best interest of this state at this time. While they force hunters to pass up small bucks, they do create other problems as well as restrict management options available to the deer manager.

According to our DMAP data a large percentage of yearling bucks have forked antlers (52% of yearling bucks harvested in 97/98 had forked antlers). A forked antler regulation, such as in MS, would not work very well because a large percentage of yearling bucks would not be protected and could be legally shot. Clubs and landowners would still have to establish volunteer regulations to protect these quality yearlings. I am not sure the three point rule established by Arkansas would be even better. A six point regulation would probably be the best point restriction, however it would not protect the really good yearling bucks with more than six points. Clubs and landowners would certainly want to protect these quality bucks with further voluntary restrictions.

DMAP also shows that forked antler yearlings weigh more than yearling spikes. Forked antler yearlings average 128 lbs. And spikes average 111 lbs. Those yearling bucks with spikes less than 3" average 104 lbs. while those spikes greater than 3" average 115 lbs. On native habitat, without year round plantings and artificial feedings, the small spikes that weigh 25 lbs. less do not catch up with those larger yearling bucks. Consequently, mandatory regulations would protect the small yearling bucks while allowing the better ones to be harvested. On lands that I work with I generally recommend that these small bodied yearling spikes be shot and hunters pass up the heavier yearlings with larger spikes and forked antlers.

In Georgia, QDM is practiced in various counties based upon a 15" outside spread. DMAP data shows the average inside spread of 3 ½ year old and older bucks is 13.4" A large percentage of adult bucks in Louisiana have an outside spread less than 15". A lot of pine dominated native habitat in Louisiana is not capable of producing bucks with large racks without intense year round agricultural plantings and artificial feeding. The swamp and marsh habitat of this state does not produce many large racked deer either. Regulations using antler spread as a criteria may not work too well in this state.

Georgia has taken the approach of establishing mandatory regulations on a county basis as long as a majority of the landowners and hunters in the county support such regulations. Establishing mandatory QDM on a parish or region basis would be the best approach for this state should the decision be made to establish QDM regulations. Regulations could then be developed based upon the habitat and deer population in that particular area. This is already being done in this state on a voluntary basis through club and landowner associations.

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Other management options available to LDWF include:
1) Reduce the statewide limit of antlered bucks, perhaps three.
2) Reduce the overall length of the deer season. Shorten the season but set dates during the times of deer activity based upon breeding information.
3) Regulate baiting and/or hunting over bait.
4) Develop a tagging system with a mandatory reporting system of deer harvested.
5) Provide either-sex harvest opportunities to landowners with less than 500 acres of land through a tagging program, not associated with DMAP, whereby antlerless deer could be harvested during the entire deer season.

QDM could also be practiced on public lands to some degree. The current programs on state WMAs are already producing quality deer. Adult bucks on state WMAs have heavier body weights than on DMAP lands.

**Visit Our Web Site at http://www.wlf.state.la.us/ to find our DMAP Application Forms**

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